



# FRAMEWORK FOR CREATING A SMART GROWTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY: A TOOL FOR SMALL CITIES AND TOWNS

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# I. INTRODUCTION

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Many small and mid-sized cities around the United States are struggling because their economies were built largely on a single economic sector that has changed significantly. For example, at one time jobs might have been heavily concentrated in industries like logging, mining, or manufacturing, but technology and market forces have transformed these sectors, and they no longer employ a large workforce. Changing circumstances, such as those caused by resource depletion, globalization, or shifts in consumer preferences, can shake the economic foundations of these communities, leaving people without jobs and cities without a healthy tax base.

Rather than simply seeking to attract major employers to replace these lost jobs, several cities have tried a different method to anticipate and overcome some of these challenges. This emerging shift toward place-based approaches to economic development can go by various names. This document uses the term “smart growth economic development” to refer to a strategy that builds upon existing assets, takes incremental actions to strengthen communities, and builds long-term value to attract a range of investments.

This smart growth economic development tool is a step-by-step guide to building a place-based economic development strategy. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) developed this tool with the assistance of CH2M Hill and Strategic Economics as part of a Smart Growth Implementation Assistance project in Kelso, Washington.<sup>1</sup> The tool is intended for small and mid-sized cities, particularly those that have limited population growth, areas of disinvestment, and/or a struggling economy.

This tool begins with an overview of key concepts for a smart growth economic development strategy (Chapter II). Next, it covers the five steps for preparing a smart growth economic development strategy (Chapter III):

1. Select the focus area.
2. Define the context.
3. Set the goals.
4. Identify existing assets and barriers.
5. Select the right tools.

This step-by-step process for preparing a smart growth economic development strategy is based on six principles:

1. Make the distinction between “growth” and “investment.”
2. Be tactical and strategic.
3. Be focused.
4. Start where there is already momentum.
5. Find the right partners for specific goals.
6. Communicate and coordinate.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information about the project and an example of the tool in action, see: EPA. *Using Smart Growth Strategies to Foster Economic Development: A Kelso, Washington, Case Study*. 2015. <http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/using-smart-growth-strategies-foster-economic-development>.

Creating a robust economic development strategy often takes a concerted effort of multiple partners coming together around a common goal. Staff from municipal governments and regional economic development organizations, nonprofit organizations seeking to help revitalize communities, and other stakeholders could use this tool to help guide their work. It presents a framework for information to gather, issues to consider, and potential approaches to explore. Every community and place is different, and communities can modify and refine this tool based on local conditions.



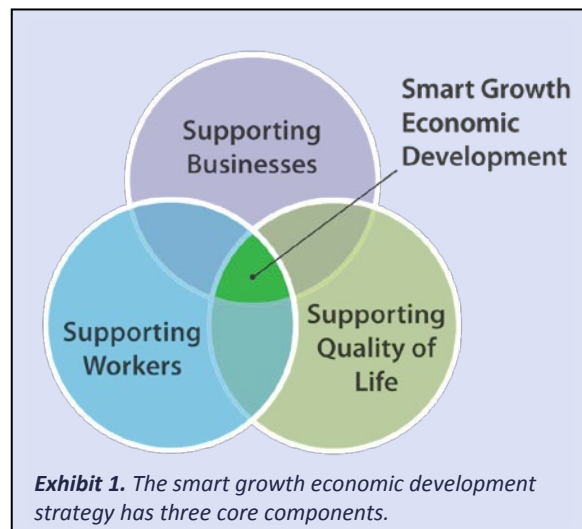
## II. GETTING STARTED: SMART GROWTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT KEY CONCEPTS

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Many communities are finding success cultivating a competitive advantage by using their unique assets to attract new investment and support existing businesses. These place-based assets might include residents and their skills; local architecture and infrastructure; academic, technical, and medical institutions; local and regional business and employment concentrations; cultural, natural, and artistic resources; and general quality of life. What distinguishes smart growth economic development from conventional economic development is the emphasis on building on these existing community assets, rather than pursuing jobs or tax base growth without particular regard for location or synergies among existing assets.

The three core components of a smart growth economic development strategy are supporting businesses, supporting workers, and supporting quality of life (Exhibit 1).

- **Supporting Businesses.** Supporting and expanding existing businesses and attracting new businesses contribute to economic development in several key ways, including helping businesses create jobs, encouraging entrepreneurship, enhancing fiscal sustainability by expanding and diversifying the tax base, and improving quality of life with new services and amenities. This component of a smart growth economic development strategy focuses on understanding the current composition and location of businesses, jobs, and potential emerging entrepreneurs in the community. This information can help reveal how well the



businesses serve local residents and contribute to quality of life and which industries have the most potential to drive economic growth in the future. Targeting key economic sectors for growth allows city and regional staff to direct their economic development efforts in a strategic manner, which helps small towns use their limited resources wisely. This part of the smart growth economic development strategy considers not only the businesses and industries with the greatest growth potential, but also where these businesses are located and how their location helps the community meet its economic, environmental, and other goals.

- **Supporting Workers.** Workforce development is important to ensuring that residents can successfully compete for employment opportunities and that all residents have the opportunity to benefit from economic prosperity. The availability of a workforce with a wide range of skills and education levels can help local businesses grow and attract new businesses. By offering residents opportunities to learn skills for a wide range of jobs, workforce development efforts might also reduce the need for residents to commute long distances to find appropriate

employment, thereby improving quality of life and reducing pollution from vehicles. This smart growth economic development component focuses on how well the skills and education of the local workforce align with the needs of existing and growing industries and provides insight into what the community could do to help workers better match businesses' needs.

- **Supporting Quality of Life.** Residents and businesses both value a community with a good quality of life. A variety of factors can improve quality of life, such as a thriving downtown or commercial district with neighborhood-serving shops and restaurants; green and open space; a variety of transportation choices, including options for walking, biking, driving, and public transit; artistic, cultural, and community resources such as museums, public art, community centers, religious institutions, and other community gathering spaces; and medical, technical, and academic institutions. Aesthetic improvements might include green infrastructure such as trees and other vegetation that help improve the pedestrian environment while absorbing rainwater and improving water and air quality. This smart growth economic development element also includes identifying key locations for development and redevelopment in the city's core, including brownfields and infill sites.

The step-by-step process for preparing a smart growth economic development strategy (presented in Chapter III) is based on six principles that are useful to consider before beginning:

1. **Make the distinction between “growth” and “investment.”** Not all communities are necessarily growing. However, in most cases, businesses, individuals, and/or public agencies continue to make investments in the community even during periods of population decline. Building on ongoing investment(s),

#### **Exhibit 2. Kelso, Washington.**

*Kelso, Washington, illustrates how a smart growth economic development strategy might build upon and improve conventional economic development approaches. A major food processor opened a plant in the city's industrial area several years ago. According to city staff, the company has had trouble retaining workers, in part because many workers do not have cars and the factory is not well served by transit. At the same time, residents of the adjacent neighborhood struggle with unemployment.*

*A smart growth economic development approach to the workforce retention problem evaluates ways to more directly connect people and resources across the city with businesses and job opportunities than would be typical with conventional approaches to economic and workforce development, neither of which tend to be “place” or neighborhood based. For example, conventional economic development might not consider a full range of transportation options to address worker mobility.*

*Alternatively, a smart growth economic development strategy might include establishing a program to recruit nearby residents to work at businesses in the city's industrial areas and creating a transit or active transportation system. For example, a safe and convenient bike route could let workers easily get to and from work without a car.*

*These actions would improve employee retention and help Kelso residents reach much-needed jobs while also making more destinations accessible without a car, reducing traffic congestion and air pollution.*

rather than “growth” as defined by increasing employment, population, or tax base, is essential to reinvigorate a struggling economy.

- 2. Be tactical and strategic.** A smart growth economic development plan should include broad, long-term strategies that set overall direction and objectives for any economic development-related activities and investments. The plan should also identify short-term, tactical actions that address specific barriers or challenges to attaining the longer-term vision. While the long-term strategies might not change for several years, tactics should be updated on a regular basis to reflect changing conditions and opportunities.
- 3. Be focused.** Investments of time, money, and other community resources are most effective when targeted to an area that is both big enough to offer opportunities for change and small enough to make tangible, visible improvements that will spur investment. Over time, small focus areas can be expanded to build on successes.

- 4. Start where there is already momentum.** Economic development efforts are most effective in places where there is already some private-sector activity so that public investments can reinforce and support investment by individual homeowners, business owners, commercial property owners, and/or banks and other financial institutions. Once these initial investments start to show success, it will be easier to attract additional investment to nearby locations, thus spreading the momentum incrementally over time.



*Exhibit 3. Traverse City, Michigan. Recognizing that its regional identity and economy depend on access to Lake Michigan, the city renovated its waterfront park in 2013, the first project to be implemented under its comprehensive Bayfront Plan.*

- 5. Find the right partners for specific goals.** Successful economic development efforts rely on partnerships across public agencies, especially when different types of funding are involved. Engaging these partners for specific and mission-appropriate goals is more effective than trying to seek support for broad or poorly defined initiatives. Communities might also set goals to align with specific funding sources to improve the odds of securing money for implementation.
- 6. Communicate and coordinate.** Good communication and coordination among groups and agencies can help ensure that all available resources support the community’s vision. For small cities with limited resources, this coordination can help achieve goals at minimal cost by avoiding redundancy, conflicting efforts, and/or spreading resources too thin for meaningful improvement.



### III. PREPARING A SMART GROWTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

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The decision to create an economic development strategy can arise from a variety of circumstances. For example, communities might create an economic development strategy:

- In the wake of a crisis, like a major employer shutting down, a natural disaster, or the need to clean up a site with contaminated soil and/or ground water.
- To help older neighborhoods, including the downtown, that suffer from long-term disinvestment.
- To take advantage of a specific event or opportunity such as a major infrastructure investment.

Regardless of the reason, communities can benefit by following a defined process to make sure that economic development efforts will have the greatest chance of meeting the community's needs and goals. Preparing a smart growth economic development strategy has five key steps:

- A. Select a focus area.
- B. Define the context.
- C. Set goals.
- D. Identify existing assets and barriers.
- E. Select the right tools.

#### STEP 1. SELECT A FOCUS AREA

The initial step in preparing a smart growth economic development strategy is to pick the specific location(s), neighborhoods, or area(s) of focus. Each area will have

distinct goals, indicators, and appropriate tools for implementation. For example, the needs of businesses in an industrial area are likely to be very different than those of downtown merchants. Whether a community is preparing a strategy for an entire city or one district or neighborhood, there are likely to be multiple subareas, each of which are defined by distinct land use patterns and/or purposes. In fact, the emphasis on specific place-based assets within a community distinguishes smart growth economic development strategies from more conventional approaches.

#### STEP 2. DEFINE THE CONTEXT

This step involves a community preparing a description of conditions in the targeted area based on qualitative and quantitative information. To the extent possible, this description should include the history of prior initiatives by both public and private-sector actors, indicating which were successful, which were unsuccessful, and which might prove to be helpful but have not yet had much impact.



*Exhibit 4. Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. Sitting at the confluence of the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers, the city's location has always been a key asset. Now its National Historic Park leverages this long history to attract visitors.*

Because economic development deals with jobs, industries, and tax revenues, communities sometimes do extensive data collection and analysis before defining their economic development goals. While data can play a critical role in defining the existing context and challenges for a focus area, extensive data collection and analysis in the early phases of developing an economic development strategy might not be necessary, especially for small communities where detailed data might not exist or be readily available for the focus area. In addition, communities might consider a broader range of

information than traditionally considered in an economic development strategy—information designed to help identify place-based assets and challenges. Such information might include walkability audits, cultural inventories, bus route mapping, or community values surveys.



*Exhibit 5. St. Michaels, Maryland. The town of just over 1,000 people takes advantage of its location on the Chesapeake Bay with a waterfront seafood restaurant and a Maritime Museum on the site of a former seafood packing house and cannery.*

### **STEP 3. SET GOALS**

Another step in creating an effective smart growth economic development strategy is identifying clear goals connected to specific conditions in the focus area. These goals should be aspirational but achievable. The list of potential goals below is not comprehensive; cities will probably need to either refine these goals based on local conditions or develop their own, more specific goals. The goals are divided into three categories—supporting businesses, supporting workers, and supporting quality of life—based on the components of a smart growth economic development strategy. This section concludes with a table listing these goals with a data indicator for each that can help the city track its progress toward achieving that goal and a target direction (i.e., the direction the indicator should move to signify progress). The table also lists potential data sources for each indicator and links to those sources where available. Step 5 lists policy tools and actions that can help achieve these goals. Following each goal is a list of the corresponding policy tools and actions from Step 5.

#### **1. Supporting Businesses**

Goals in this section are intended to help local businesses grow and attract new businesses. Actions to meet these goals can help businesses create jobs, encourage entrepreneurship, enhance fiscal sustainability by expanding and diversifying the tax base, and improve quality of life with new services and amenities.

##### ***G1. Retain existing businesses***

Existing businesses are the foundation of any economic growth strategy. By building on what already exists, cities can support current businesses and create a strong foundation on which to

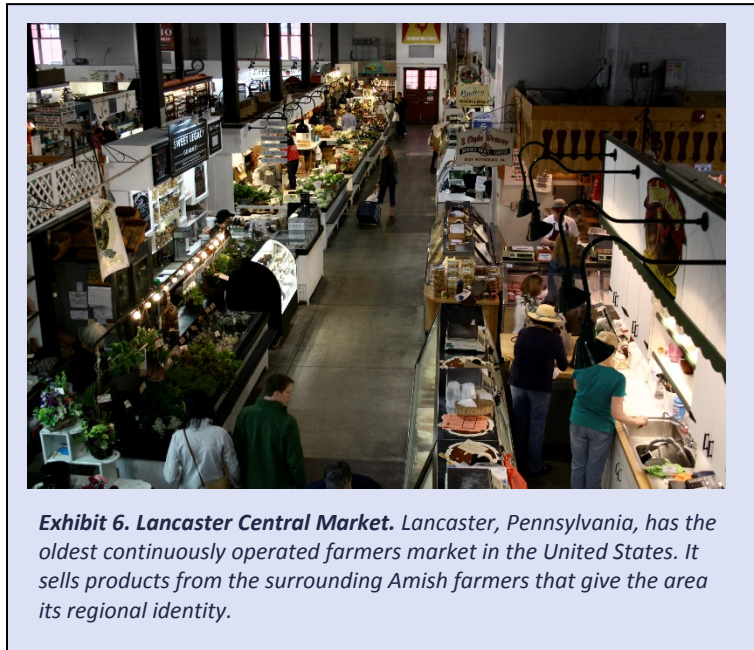
attract new businesses, residents, and employment. To tailor this goal to the local context, a city could interview local business owners to learn about their challenges and explore how an economic development strategy could best support their long-term success. Supporting existing businesses could include actions like adding or improving infrastructure or encouraging new or redeveloped housing that would better meet the needs of workers who do not currently live in the community. Other actions to improve the downtown like streetscape improvements, making biking and walking more enjoyable and safe, and planning activities that bring people downtown, can help retain existing businesses by broadening their customer base. (See policies 4, 12, 13, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 23, 24, 25, 31, and 34 in Table 2.)

### ***G2. Attract new businesses***

Attracting new businesses—particularly in high-priority industries—could help increase local employment options and build the city’s tax base. Attracting new businesses is often most effective when the effort is tailored to the industries that are best suited to a community’s assets and opportunities and can provide high-quality employment options for local residents or other services and amenities desired by the community. (See policies 4, 12, 17, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, and 31 in Table 2.)

### ***G3. Promote entrepreneurship***

Encouraging entrepreneurs to start businesses gives people power over their own lives and lets them build wealth in their own communities. Business owners who also live in the community tend to spend more on local business services and keep more of their earnings in the local economy. They also have a vested interest in the community and are less likely to move elsewhere in response to incentives offered by other cities. (See policies 4, 12, 17, and 30 in Table 2.)



*Exhibit 6. Lancaster Central Market. Lancaster, Pennsylvania, has the oldest continuously operated farmers market in the United States. It sells products from the surrounding Amish farmers that give the area its regional identity.*

### ***G4. Encourage business growth in infill locations***

In addition to encouraging expansion of existing businesses and attracting new businesses, the community can consider where businesses locate within the community. Encouraging business growth in specific locations, such as historic downtowns or other core activity centers, can help improve the overall quality of life for existing and future residents, workers, and visitors. This improved quality of life also translates into a competitive advantage for local businesses and is critical for strengthening the local economy. (See policies 1, 2, 3, 4, 12, 17, 22, 23, 24, 25, 41, and 49 in Table 2.)



## 2. Supporting Workers

Ensuring that local residents have access to employment and the right education and skills to compete successfully is integral to any economic development strategy. Goals in this section address increasing access to jobs and workforce development, including K-12 to advanced and continuing education.

### ***G5. Improve access to local employment opportunities***

Improving access to employment opportunities entails bringing more jobs closer to residents or increasing access through transportation investments in better bike, pedestrian, and public transportation facilities. This goal might include improving the local jobs-housing balance, but it should also aim to increase access to regional employment centers. Encouraging businesses to locate near public transportation and developing better public transportation service, including local circulators and/or rideshare programs, would expand commute options for local workers. (See policies 12, 30, 31, 32, 44, 45, and 46 in Table 2.)

### ***G6. Increase access to advanced education, workforce development, and job training opportunities***

Providing workers with an opportunity to educate themselves and train for more skilled jobs helps them compete for jobs in the community now and in the future. A workforce with the right mix of skills and education is an important asset for attracting new industries. Offering local residents the opportunity to gain skills for a wider range of jobs can also reduce the need for residents to commute long distances to find appropriate employment, thereby improving quality of life for workers and reducing traffic congestion and air pollution. To tailor this goal to local conditions, city staff would need to know the education and skill levels of their local workforce and the skills that potential growth industries need. This analysis might result in goals tailored to different industries and types of advanced education and workforce training, including community and four-year colleges and job training programs that teach both job-specific technical skills and soft skills such as communication, teamwork, and time management. Local educational institutions and job training centers can be key partners in achieving these goals. (See policies 12, 14, 30, and 31 in Table 2.)

### ***G7. Improve the quality of K-12 education***

The foundation of a good education begins at a young age; therefore, having a high-quality public school district is an important component to building a skilled workforce. Specific goals could also be set to ensure that students receive appropriate training, such as establishing science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) programs, which help young people compete for jobs and advanced education in fields that use these skills. K-12 institutions might also include resume-writing,



**Exhibit 7. Napa Valley, California.** Napa Valley has cultivated its reputation as a world-renowned wine-growing industry. Agricultural preserve areas help to protect this regional asset from new residential and commercial development.

internships, and computer classes as part of the curriculum. In addition to preparing local youth for success, a high-performing school district attracts young families and the businesses that want to employ them. Good schools could, therefore, help catalyze reinvestment in existing neighborhoods.<sup>2</sup> (See policies 9 and 12 in Table 2.)

### 3. Supporting Quality of Life

This section focuses on improving quality of life and the environment, with the goal of helping communities compete for new economic growth and better serve residents, businesses, and visitors.

#### ***G8. Promote a vibrant downtown or commercial district***

A vibrant downtown or commercial district can be a local entertainment and retail destination and a center for community activities and civic life. If successful, these supporting activities can also lead to downtown property contributing more to the city's tax base. Revitalizing a struggling downtown or commercial district can be challenging, especially if broader national and regional trends do not support local retail growth.

Achieving this goal often requires ongoing collaboration between civic leaders, business owners, and residents, as well as public infrastructure investments.

Meaningful results can take time. However, mixed-use, downtown areas, even in very small communities, typically contribute the highest property tax revenue per acre of any area in a community, even before revitalization, making downtown revitalization a worthwhile investment for any community's fiscal health.<sup>3</sup> (See policies 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 12, 13, 24, 26, 42, 43, 44, and 49 in Table 2.)



*Exhibit 8. Frankfort, Kentucky. The state capital of Kentucky has been working to support existing businesses and attract new businesses downtown through the national Main Street Program.*

#### ***G9. Attract stores and services for daily needs to downtowns and residential neighborhoods***

Easy access to needed goods and services—in a downtown or in residential neighborhoods—is important for a high quality of life. This goal focuses on retail and services for daily needs—such as nutritious foods, medicine, and other essential items—rather than on nonessentials and luxury goods. Communities could include this goal in their economic development strategy for neighborhoods without an easily accessible grocery or drugstore. (See policies 1, 2, 3, 12, 16, 36, 43, 44, 46, 47, 48, and 50 in Table 2.)

<sup>2</sup> For information on why and how communities can employ smart growth planning principles to build schools that better serve and support students, staff, parents, and the entire community, see EPA. *Schools for Successful Communities: An Element of Smart Growth*. 2004. <http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/schools-successful-communities-element-smart-growth>.

<sup>3</sup> Minicozzi, Joseph. "The Smart Math of Mixed-Use Development." *Planetizen*. Jan. 23, 2012. <http://www.planetizen.com/node/53922>.

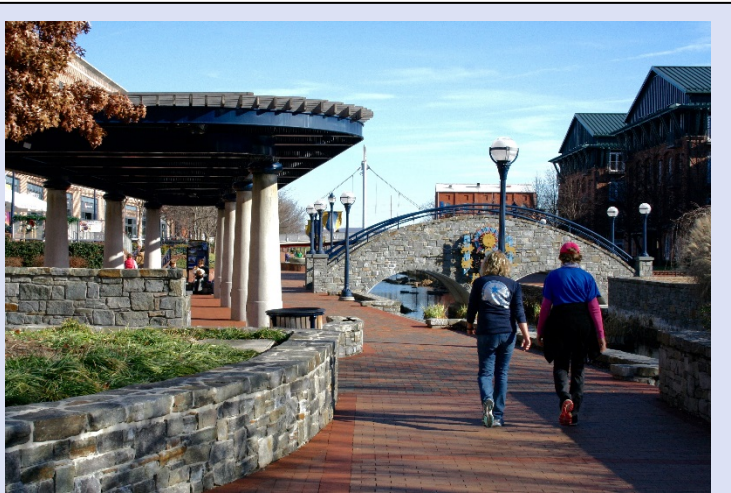


**G10. Ensure a wide range of housing types that are affordable to different income levels**

High-quality, centrally located residential neighborhoods with homes appropriate for a range of income levels and family types make it possible for people to live near their jobs and let residents stay in the same neighborhood even if their income or lifestyle changes. If a city does not have enough appealing neighborhoods, it might not attract workers and businesses. At the same time, if lower-income residents cannot afford homes, they might be forced to leave the city, removing workers and customers from the local economy. A mix of different housing types (e.g., rental and for sale, multifamily and detached, and large and small) can accommodate people in different life phases, from starting out in the workforce to raising a family to retiring. (See policies 1, 2, 3, 7, 11, 12, 15, 27, 28, 29, 33, and 37 in Table 2.)

**G11. Increase access to open space, parks, and recreation**

Open space, parks, and recreation are important to residents’ physical and mental health. Trails, paths, and on-street bike routes that connect neighborhoods to employment centers could improve access to jobs and reduce driving as workers are more likely to walk or bike to work if it is safe and convenient. Open space and public gathering spaces, including playgrounds and parks, can raise property values in residential areas<sup>4</sup> and could attract new residents and workers. A community could tailor this goal to specify improving existing open space or establishing new open spaces, based on the current location and condition of its public spaces. (See policies 1, 5, 12, 35, 38, 44, and 46 in Table 2.)



*Exhibit 9. Frederick, Maryland. While Carroll Creek Park began as a flood control project, its evolution as a cultural and recreational amenity has helped stimulate economic development. More than \$150 million in private investment is underway along the park.*

**G12. Preserve natural space in the city and surrounding region**

Preserving natural areas in the city and surrounding region provides important recreational, ecological, and economic benefits that enhance quality of life. These areas might be a natural buffer along a river that keeps pollution out of the water and absorbs flood waters, a park that attracts residents and tourists, or a field where children can play. Encouraging growth in infill locations and on already-developed sites helps reduce the pressure to develop these natural areas, making it easier to protect them. The community could examine projected climate change impacts for its region to determine the boundaries of land it might want to preserve to help protect against future floods, wildfires, and other natural hazards. (See policies 1, 5, 12, and 38 in Table 2.)

<sup>4</sup> Shoup, Lily and Reid Ewing. *The Economic Benefits of Open Space, Recreation Facilities and Walkable Community Design*. Active Living Research. 2010. <http://activelivingresearch.org/node/12477>.

### ***G13. Improve walking and biking facilities***

Improved infrastructure for walking and biking provides numerous benefits for residents, workers, and visitors. Sidewalks, bike lanes, and paths make walking and biking safer and more appealing, encouraging more people to try it. Traveling to work, school, or stores on foot or by bike lets people work physical activity into their daily routines, which can improve their physical and mental health. Creating more transportation options makes it easier for workers to get to more jobs and lets people choose not to drive, which reduces congestion and pollution. From a business standpoint, many neighborhood-oriented retail and service establishments also see increased sales when access by bike or on foot is improved.<sup>5</sup> (See policies 1, 2, 3, 12, 44, 46, and 47 in Table 2.)

### ***G14. Maintain character and distinctive community assets***

During transitional periods, it is important for a community to maintain the places and institutions that make it special, such as religious institutions, public art, museums, natural landscapes, gathering places, and historic buildings. These places, along with attractive streetscapes and storefronts, contribute to a sense of place and neighborhood identity, which help retain existing residents and could attract new residents and businesses. (See policies 1, 10, 12, 15, 27, and 38 in Table 2.)



*Exhibit 10. Waitsfield, Vermont. Located in the Mad River Valley between two mountain ranges, one of the town's key assets is its natural beauty, which attracts snow skiers and summer vacationers. Protecting parts of its rural heritage like the Great Eddy Covered Bridge helps preserve what makes the area distinctive.*

### ***G15. Allow a mix of land uses in appropriate locations***

Districts with homes, stores and services, civic places, and other land uses put residents closer to jobs and their daily needs, allowing them to walk, bike, or drive shorter distances. This convenience is particularly important for people who do not have cars. The varied uses create lively neighborhoods with a sense of place. Adjusting zoning codes to allow mixed-use districts is often a critical first step in developing these areas. (See policies 1, 2, 3, and 12 in Table 2.)

### ***G16. Ensure compatibility of adjacent land uses***

Organic growth sometimes results in incompatible land uses close to one another. For example, homes might be interspersed with industrial uses or too close to a freeway, which could put residents' health at risk. Residential complaints could create an inhospitable environment for local businesses, which might relocate. If an evaluation of current land uses suggests the presence of such

<sup>5</sup> Leinberger, Christopher B., and Mariela Alfonzo. *Walk this Way: The Economic Promise of Walkable Places in Metropolitan Washington, D.C.* Brookings Institution. 2012. <http://www.brookings.edu/research/papers/2012/05/25-walkable-places-leinberger>.

issues, city staff might want to establish a goal to work with residents and businesses to address concerns or to update zoning codes to prevent new development from creating similar problems. (See policies 1, 12, and 40 in Table 2.)






**G17. Prepare for climate change**














Many communities are already experiencing effects of climate change. Depending on the region, impacts might include more severe storms, higher temperatures, more flooding, extended drought, and rising sea levels. Communities that understand the current and projected impacts of climate change can plan their economic development to protect their residents, businesses, and infrastructure from harm and take advantage of new opportunities that climate change might bring. Because climate change affects every aspect of a community, planning for climate impacts should be incorporated into economic development, land use, transportation, housing, and other plans. If a community can show it has considered how the changing climate affects its economy and is preparing for and adapting to these changes, it could be more attractive to businesses looking for long-term security and stability. (See policies 6, 12, 38, and 39 in Table 2.)








Table 1 lists the goals described above. Each goal includes a data indicator that can help the city track its progress toward achieving that goal and a target direction (i.e., the direction the indicator should move to signify progress). The table also lists potential data sources for each indicator and links to those sources where available.

**Table 1. Economic development goals and indicators.**

Target Key:	 Decline	 Maintain	 Increase
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GOAL		INDICATOR	TARGET	SOURCE
<b>Supporting Businesses</b>				
G1	Retain existing businesses	Number of existing businesses		City business license data
G2	Attract new businesses	Number of new businesses		City business license data
G3	Promote entrepreneurship	Number of new businesses founded in the city and by city residents		City business license data
G4	Encourage business growth in infill locations	Number of new businesses in downtown and other core locations		City business license data
<b>Supporting Workers</b>				
G5	Improve access to local employment opportunities	Number of jobs in the city		U.S. Census. "LEHD OnTheMap." <a href="http://onthemap.ces.census.gov/">http://onthemap.ces.census.gov/</a> .
		Number of jobs in a designated radius		U.S. Census. "LEHD OnTheMap." <a href="http://onthemap.ces.census.gov/">http://onthemap.ces.census.gov/</a> .
		Average commute time		U.S. Census. "American FactFinder." <a href="http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml">http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml</a> .

GOAL		INDICATOR	TARGET	SOURCE
G6	Increase access to advanced education, workforce development, and job training opportunities	Unemployment rate		U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. "Local Area Unemployment Statistics Map." <a href="http://data.bls.gov/map/MapToolServlet?survey=la&amp;map=county&amp;seasonal=u">http://data.bls.gov/map/MapToolServlet?survey=la&amp;map=county&amp;seasonal=u</a> . The Bureau of Labor Statistics provides county-level unemployment rates. State agencies generally can provide city-level unemployment rates.
		Educational attainment		U.S. Census. "American FactFinder." <a href="http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml">http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml</a> .
G7	Improve the quality of K-12 education	State school performance scores		State Achievement Index Report
<b>Supporting Quality of Life</b>				
G8	Promote a vibrant downtown or commercial district	Retail sales for downtown or commercial district		City sales tax data
		Retail and office lease rates for downtown or commercial district		Business survey
G9	Attract stores and services for daily needs to downtowns and residential neighborhoods	Number of retail businesses		City business license data
		Transit frequency, coverage, and ridership		Local transit provider
		Walk Score for key residential neighborhoods		Walk Score. <a href="https://www.walkscore.com">https://www.walkscore.com</a> .
		Presence of full-service grocery store and drugstore within 1 mile radius		Google Maps. <a href="https://maps.google.com">https://maps.google.com</a> .
G10	Ensure a wide range of housing types that are affordable to different income levels	Number of homes affordable to each income group		U.S. Census. "American FactFinder." <a href="http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml">http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml</a>
G11	Increase access to open space, parks, and recreation	Amount of land dedicated to open space or parks		City zoning maps
		Miles and number of trails and paths		Google Maps. <a href="https://maps.google.com">https://maps.google.com</a> .
G12	Preserve natural space in the city and surrounding region	Percentage of land that is natural space in the city and region		Local and county land use maps

GOAL		INDICATOR	TARGET	SOURCE
G13	Improve walking and biking facilities	Miles and number of bike lanes and other bike infrastructure		City staff
		Percentage of residents who commute to work by walking or biking		U.S. Census. "American FactFinder." <a href="http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml">http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/community_facts.xhtml</a> .
		Number of pedestrian and bicycle crashes		Police department
G14	Maintain character and distinctive community assets	Inventory or map of community assets		City staff with community input
G15	Allow a mix of land uses in appropriate locations	Presence of districts zoned for a mix of uses		City zoning maps
G16	Ensure compatibility of adjacent land uses	Presence of compatible adjacent land uses		City zoning maps
G17	Prepare for climate change	Plan detailing strategies to prepare for climate change impacts		City staff

#### STEP 4. IDENTIFY EXISTING ASSETS AND BARRIERS

A smart growth economic development strategy should reflect an area’s existing assets and the barriers that impede achieving community goals. Identifying barriers to meeting a goal is an important step because implementation tools and resources are generally more effective when they are selected to overcome a specific obstacle rather than achieve a broad goal. For example, if a city has the goal of making its downtown more vibrant, the potential barriers to meeting this goal are diverse, including:

- Outdated and undersized retail space.
- A lack of nearby residents to support retail demand.
- Absentee property owners uninterested in investing in downtown buildings.
- A lack of wayfinding.
- A need for additional or more convenient parking.

Each of these barriers would need different tools to achieve the goal of a vibrant downtown. For instance, a façade improvement program is unlikely to help significantly if the major problem is the lack of nearby residents to support existing businesses.

#### STEP 5. SELECT THE RIGHT TOOLS

Tools will be most effective when linked to specific barriers. Sometimes more than one tool can help achieve a particular goal. This section explores policy tools and actions that communities could include as part of a smart growth economic development strategy. It includes conventional economic development tools and tools that might not typically be considered part of an economic development strategy—such as transportation options or infill development—that support economic development. The more conventional tools, such as streamlined permitting processes or business improvement



districts, could be applied through a “smart growth filter”—that is, to encourage economic development in places that cities have identified for growth, such as downtowns and infill areas.

Policy tools and actions often support multiple goals across the three components of a smart growth economic development strategy. A particular tool might support workers, support businesses, and improve quality of life. The policy tools and actions are, therefore, broken into eight cross-cutting topical areas:

1. Land use policy.
2. Partnership building.
3. Business development and entrepreneurship.
4. Workforce development and employment.
5. Health and environment.
6. Brownfield and infill redevelopment.
7. Transportation.
8. Infrastructure financing.

The following table describes specific tools and actions in each category, including: a potential program administrator, an entity that could be a good choice to lead implementation; the smart growth economic development goals (from Section III.C) that the tool or action could help achieve; and links to more information, if available. This is not a comprehensive list. It is intended as a starting point for communities to identify the tools and resources that are available locally and are best suited to the local context, barriers, and goals. The inventory might also help staff develop new and innovative strategies and programs as needed.

**Table 2. Policy tools and actions.**

Policy Tools and Actions	Administrator	Goals	More Information
<p><b>Land Use Policy.</b> Land use policies could help shape development patterns to help the community get the type of development it wants in the appropriate location. These policies would have the greatest impact in places where current zoning practices, development standards, and/or building codes make greenfield development easier and cheaper than infill, redevelopment, or mixed use. Zoning that is flexible enough to react to changing market conditions helps a community’s economy weather downturns and take advantage of opportunities.<sup>6</sup></p>			
<p><b>1. Area planning:</b> Areas that are experiencing market stagnation or declines in value might need planning and investment to stimulate growth. Create a set of plans for downtown and other infill locations to establish place-specific goals, identify existing challenges, create policies to guide future development, and develop implementation strategies.</p>	<p>Planning department</p>	<p>G4, G8, G9, G10, G11, G12, G13, G14, G15, G16</p>	
<p><b>2. Zoning for mixed-use development:</b> Adjusting zoning codes to allow mixed-use development helps create walkable, mixed-use places. Review the city's zoning ordinance to see if existing zoning allows mixed-use development in downtowns and other central locations, at densities that are consistent with market demand. If it does not, consider revising the ordinance to allow a mix of uses.</p>	<p>Planning department</p>	<p>G4, G8, G9, G10, G13, G15</p>	<p>For more information on codes and ordinances that support smart growth development, see EPA’s <i>Essential Smart Growth Fixes for Urban and Suburban Zoning Codes</i><sup>7</sup> and Smart Growth America’s <i>Smart Growth Implementation Toolkit</i>.<sup>8</sup></p>
<p><b>3. Revised development standards:</b> Encourage mixed-use, compact development by reviewing and revising development standards to allow, encourage, or require desired building types, land uses, and density. Changes might include reduced minimum lot sizes, setbacks, or parking ratios, or increased maximum densities or floor-area ratios.</p>	<p>Planning department</p>	<p>G4, G8, G9, G10, G13, G15</p>	<p>For more information on infill development incentives, visit PolicyLink’s Infill Incentives web page.<sup>9</sup></p>

<sup>6</sup> For information about local zoning codes that can address the most common barriers local governments face in implementing smart growth strategies, see EPA. “Essential Smart Growth Fixes for Communities.” <http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/essential-smart-growth-fixes-communities>. Accessed Feb. 3, 2014.

<sup>7</sup> EPA. *Essential Smart Growth Fixes for Urban and Suburban Zoning Codes*. 2009. <http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/essential-smart-growth-fixes-communities>.

<sup>8</sup> Smart Growth America. “Smart Growth Implementation Toolkit.” <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/leadership-institute/implementation-tools>. Accessed Jan. 27, 2015.

<sup>9</sup> PolicyLink. “Infill Incentives.” <http://policylink.info/EDTK/Infill>. Accessed Jun. 27, 2014.

Policy Tools and Actions	Administrator	Goals	More Information
<p><b>4. Quick-reference zoning handout:</b> Make easy-to-understand zoning handouts available online and at city hall. Land use and zoning codes can often be difficult to interpret. Providing a simple explanation of what is allowed and contact information for further questions can ease the burden of seeking city approvals.</p>	<p>Planning department</p>	<p>G1, G2, G3, G4, G8</p>	<p>See an example of a quick-reference zoning handout from Anaheim, California.<sup>10</sup></p>
<p><b>5. Preservation of open and agricultural space:</b> Preserving natural areas in the city and surrounding region provides important recreational, ecological, and economic benefits that enhance quality of life. Review the city's zoning ordinances and make necessary adjustments to preserve agricultural land, open space, and other environmentally sensitive areas.</p>	<p>Planning department</p>	<p>G11, G12</p>	<p>For more information on protecting open space and farmland, visit the Municipal Research and Service Center of Washington's Web page on preservation techniques.<sup>11</sup></p>
<p><b>6. Incorporating climate change considerations into land use policies and plans:</b> Determining which areas of the communities are safer over the long term is critical to land use planning. Investigate projected climate change impacts and how they are likely to affect current natural hazards. Integrate the community's hazard mitigation plan, if one exists, with the land use plan, and ensure that both use projections rather than historical trends.</p>	<p>Planning and emergency management departments</p>	<p>G17</p>	<p>For more information on integrating climate change into hazard mitigation planning, see case studies and lessons learned from ICLEI.<sup>12</sup> For information on smart growth policies that also help prepare for climate change, see EPA's <i>Using Smart Growth Strategies to Create More Resilient Communities in the Washington, D.C., Region</i>.<sup>13</sup></p>

<sup>10</sup> City of Anaheim. *C-G Zone (Commercial General) Land Use & Development Standards*. 2008. <http://www.anaheim.net/documentcenter/view/1191>.

<sup>11</sup> Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington. "Farmland Preservation Techniques and Sustainable Agriculture." <http://www.mrsc.org/subjects/planning/farmland.aspx>. Accessed Jun. 27, 2014.

<sup>12</sup> Higbee, Melissa. *Integrating Hazard Mitigation and Climate Adaptation Planning: Case Studies and Lessons Learned*. ICLEI. 2014. <http://icleiusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/Integrating-Hazard-Mitigation-and-Climate-Adaptation-Planning.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> EPA. *Using Smart Growth Strategies to Create More Resilient Communities in the Washington, D.C., Region*. 2013. <http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/using-smart-growth-strategies-create-more-resilient-communities-washington-dc-region>.

Policy Tools and Actions	Administrator	Goals	More Information
<p><b>7. Adaptive reuse of buildings:</b> Development standards and building codes designed for new construction often make rehabilitating older, historic buildings prohibitively expensive. Review and revise development standards, zoning, building, and safety codes to allow adaptive reuse of existing buildings in central locations, encouraging infill development and reducing environmental impacts from new construction. Changes to allow adaptive reuse could include reducing minimum residential unit sizes and commercial or residential parking requirements or grandfathering in nonconforming building heights; setbacks; floor plans; and electrical, mechanical, fire, and life safety requirements.</p>	<p>Building and safety department, with assistance from planning department</p>	<p>G8, G10</p>	<p>See an example of an adaptive reuse policy from Los Angeles.<sup>14</sup> For more resources on adaptive reuse, see EPA’s Web page on smart growth and sustainable preservation of existing and historic buildings.<sup>15</sup></p>
<p><b>8. Community Code enforcement program:</b> Rehabilitating vacant or blighted properties in downtowns and other central locations can clean up environmental hazards and make these locations more attractive to investors and residents. The program could include reviewing and revising existing codes to more explicitly address the code violation issues in the community, preparing community code enforcement guidelines or protocols so that community members are clear about what they can do to report code violations to the city, and developing a website or other tools for reporting and tracking progress resolving complaints. Some communities have hired outside consultants to train all of the actors in the code compliance process, including community members, city staff, and property owners.</p>	<p>Building and safety department</p>	<p>G8</p>	<p>For resources on code enforcement and other strategies for improving vacant and blighted properties, see the Center for Community Progress’ Toolkit.<sup>16</sup> For strategies to overcome barriers to dealing with chronic nuisance problems, including blighted properties, see Enterprise’s <i>Solving Chronic Nuisance Problems</i>.<sup>17</sup> See an example of a code enforcement website from the city of San Diego<sup>18</sup> and a local community organization with a Code Enforcement and Nuisance Rental Properties Committee that works closely with city officials.<sup>19</sup></p>

<sup>14</sup> City of Los Angeles. *Adaptive Reuse Program*. 2006. <http://www.downtownla.com/images/reports/adaptive-rescue-ordinance.pdf>.

<sup>15</sup> EPA. “Smart Growth and Preservation of Existing and Historic Buildings.” <http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/smart-growth-and-preservation-existing-and-historic-buildings>. Accessed Feb. 3, 2015.

<sup>16</sup> Center for Community Progress. “Building American Cities Toolkit.” <http://www.communityprogress.net/toolkit-home-page-pages-292.php>. Accessed Feb. 3, 2015.

Policy Tools and Actions	Administrator	Goals	More Information
<p><b>Partnership Building.</b> Because smart growth economic development encompasses many issues, municipal governments often look for partners from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors to help achieve community goals. For example, some cities and school districts team up to better prepare high school students to enter the workforce. In other cases, city staff might simply convene groups to address a specific challenge.</p>			
<p><b>9. City-school district partnership:</b> A high-quality public education system supports the local economy by helping to ensure the community has workers with needed skills and better preparing students for jobs. Cities can work more closely with local school districts to improve public education by supporting school programs and building connections between government and the education sector. Options could include regular meetings with administrative staff and school board members or creating an education task force comprised of representatives from the education system, business community, and local government. Potential avenues of exploration might include developing science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) curricula in K-12 schools or creating a mentorship program for high school students to teach them about different educational opportunities and professions and better prepare them to enter the workforce.</p>	<p>City manager and/or mayor's office</p>	<p>G7</p>	
<p><b>10. Original art mural program:</b> A mural program can bring public art to the community and enhance the local sense of place. Artists work with the city and apply for permits. Applicants hold a community meeting to notify the neighborhood about the proposed artwork and answer questions. This program could help improve the neighborhood's appearance by adding art and removing graffiti.</p>	<p>Planning department</p>	<p>G14</p>	<p>See an example of regulations for an original art mural program from Portland, Oregon.<sup>20</sup></p>

<sup>17</sup> Campbell, John H. *Solving Chronic Nuisance Problems*. 2001. <http://www.enterprisecommunity.com/resources/ResourceDetails?ID=19720.pdf>.

<sup>18</sup> City of San Diego. "Code Enforcement Home." 2015. <http://www.sandiego.gov/ced/index.shtml>. Accessed Dec. 16, 2015.

<sup>19</sup> College Area Community Council. "Code Enforcement and Nuisance Rental Properties." 2015. [http://www.collegearea.org/cacc/index.php/about-us/committees-of-the-cacc#code\\_enforcement\\_committee](http://www.collegearea.org/cacc/index.php/about-us/committees-of-the-cacc#code_enforcement_committee). Accessed Mar. 5, 2015.

<sup>20</sup> City of Portland. "Original Art Mural Permits." <http://www.portlandoregon.gov/bds/50737>. Accessed Sep. 22, 2014.



Policy Tools and Actions	Administrator	Goals	More Information
<p><b>11. Landlord education program:</b> A landlord education program is intended to help property owners learn best practices in property management. The program could educate landlords on complying with codes, applicant screening, fair housing rules, lease agreements, the eviction process, and other relevant information. Program benefits could include better property maintenance, safer homes, a more stable tenant base, and lower city costs for code enforcement.</p>	Code enforcement department	G10	For more information on working with landlords, see the Center for Community Progress' Web page. <sup>21</sup> See an example of a landlord education program from Fargo, North Dakota. <sup>22</sup>
<p><b>12. Peer city technical assistance program:</b> To help with local economic development goals, work with a peer city in the same state to learn best practices in applying for grant money and developing programs that adhere to state laws. Reaching out to another city's staff members could reveal how that city was successful in its application and lessons relevant to the local process.</p>	City manager	All	See an example of a peer city technical assistance program from Massachusetts. <sup>23</sup>
<p><b>13. Unified community events calendar:</b> Create a unified calendar of downtown events to inform local businesses and potential customers. Designate a point person to ask businesses and nonprofits about upcoming events and update the calendar weekly or monthly.</p>	City manager	G1, G8	See an example of a unified events calendar from Rochester, New York. <sup>24</sup>
<p><b>14. Student internships:</b> Offer local government internships for high school or college students. Many students have volunteer requirements and want professional experience. Students can often help city staff at little or no cost. Interns need clearly defined roles to ensure students and the city get the most out of the experience.</p>	City manager	G6	

<sup>21</sup> Center for Community Progress. "Working with Rental Landlords and Property Investors." <http://www.communityprogress.net/working-with-rental-landlords-investors-pages-205.php>. Accessed Apr. 9, 2015.

<sup>22</sup> City of Fargo. "Landlord Training Program." <http://www.cityoffargo.com/CityInfo/Departments/Police/CitizenResources/LandlordTrainingProgram/>. Accessed Dec. 16, 2015.

<sup>23</sup> Commonwealth of Massachusetts. "Peer to Peer Technical Assistance Program." <http://www.mass.gov/hed/community/funding/peer-to-peer.html>. Accessed Sep. 22, 2014.

<sup>24</sup> City of Rochester. "Events." <http://www.cityofrochester.gov/events.aspx>. Accessed Sep. 22, 2014.

Policy Tools and Actions	Administrator	Goals	More Information
<p><b>15. Neighborhood association support:</b> Organizations often need assistance when starting out. To take advantage of existing resources and experience, connect neighborhood associations with other local neighborhood associations or with organizations active in the community, such as churches, service organizations, and nonprofit organizations.</p>	<p>Economic development department</p>	<p>G10, G14</p>	<p>For ideas on how to make a neighborhood association successful, see a toolbox created by Irving, Texas.<sup>25</sup></p>
<p><b>16. Business assistance program:</b> Create a program to provide local businesses with technical assistance in marketing, accounting, or finance, and low-interest loans to fund improvements to landscaping, signs, or building façades.</p>	<p>Economic development department</p>	<p>G9</p>	<p>See an example of a business assistance program from Cleveland, Ohio.<sup>26</sup></p>
<p><b>Business Development and Entrepreneurship.</b> These policy tools and actions are designed to help existing businesses expand and encourage new businesses. Most of these tools are most effective when targeted to specific, high-priority industries or locations identified for revitalization and investment such as a downtown. City staff can implement some of the tools and actions, such as the streamlined permit applications and approvals. Others, such as promoting local hiring, would require city staff to facilitate connections between local businesses and other organizations.<sup>27</sup></p>			
<p><b>17. Streamlined permitting process:</b> Review existing permit and approval processes, and give businesses investing in downtown and other infill locations an expedited permit process to shorten the timeline and reduce development costs. The city could also help applicants fill out permit applications or reduce permit fees to encourage more development in central locations.</p>	<p>City manager and planning and code enforcement departments</p>	<p>G1, G2, G3, G4</p>	<p>For help evaluating existing permit processes and ideas on how to develop an expedited process, see <i>Local Government Permitting Best Practices</i> developed by the state of Washington.<sup>28</sup></p>

<sup>25</sup> City of Irving. "Neighborhood Association Toolbox." <http://cityofirving.org/198/Neighborhood-Association-Toolbox>. Accessed Feb. 2, 2015.

<sup>26</sup> City of Cleveland. "Small Businesses and Retail." <http://www.rethinkcleveland.org/About-Us/Our-Services/Small-Business-and-Retail.aspx>. Accessed Dec. 16, 2015.

<sup>27</sup> The National League of Cities has compiled strategies for local governments to help small businesses and entrepreneurs in two reports: National League of Cities. *Supporting Entrepreneurs and Small Businesses: A Tool Kit for Local Leaders*. 2012. <http://www.nlc.org/find-city-solutions/city-solutions-and-applied-research/economic-development/small-business-and-entrepreneurship/supporting-entrepreneurs-and-small-business>; National League of Cities. *Big Ideas for Small Business Report*. 2014. <http://www.nlc.org/find-city-solutions/city-solutions-and-applied-research/economic-development/small-business-and-entrepreneurship/big-ideas-for-small-business>.

<sup>28</sup> Washington State Governor's Office of Regulatory Assistance. *Local Government Permitting: Best Practices*. 2008. [http://www.oria.wa.gov/Portals/oria/VersionedDocuments/Local\\_Government/lgp\\_best\\_practices\\_report.pdf](http://www.oria.wa.gov/Portals/oria/VersionedDocuments/Local_Government/lgp_best_practices_report.pdf).

Policy Tools and Actions	Administrator	Goals	More Information
<p><b>18. Designated economic development staff person:</b> An effective economic development strategy requires dedicated staff time to implement programs and build relationships in the community. Assign one person to economic development activities, including operating programs, pursuing funding, and tracking results so the city can modify its activities and investments as business needs change.</p>	City manager	G1, G2	
<p><b>19. Economic development task force:</b> Ongoing collaboration between the public and private sectors is an important component of economic development. To encourage collaboration, form an economic development task force with representatives from the public and private sectors to discuss how the city could better facilitate economic development. Representatives from the business community could include business owners, property owners and developers, or leaders from the Chamber of Commerce or other business groups. This group could meet monthly or quarterly.</p>	Economic development department, with participation from planning, building and safety, and transportation departments, and/or the mayor’s office	G1, G2	
<p><b>20. Economic development website:</b> In addition to providing new and expanding businesses with information and resources, a dedicated economic development website sends a clear message that a city is “open for business” and available to help. Create and maintain an economic development website that could be a one-stop shop to help new and existing business owners with business startup or expansion. This website could include a step-by-step guide to starting or expanding a business in the city, links to important contacts and forms, and links to resources outside the community, such as loan programs from the Small Business Administration or community development financial institutions or technical assistance from a regional small business development center.</p>	Economic development department	G1, G2	See a sample economic development website for Douglas, Georgia. <sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Douglas-Coffee County Chamber and Economic Development Authority. “Economic Development.” <http://www.douglasga.org/EconomicDevelopment.html>. Accessed Jan. 22, 2015.

Policy Tools and Actions	Administrator	Goals	More Information
<p><b>21. Regular visits to businesses:</b> Building relationships with local business owners lets city staff provide responsive, hands-on assistance and sends a message that each and every business is important to the city. Assign a staff person or team to build relationships with local business owners in high-priority economic sectors or locations. Establish contact by visiting local business owners in person, and maintain relationships through regular check-ins at times and locations convenient to the business owners. City staff could also participate in the local Chamber of Commerce, downtown association, business improvement district, or other business associations.</p>	<p>Economic development department; could also include participation by city manager, mayor's office, or other departments</p>	<p>G1</p>	
<p><b>22. Real estate broker outreach:</b> Developing relationships with local and regional real estate brokers can help raise the city's visibility as a potential location for new businesses and development, as well as send a message that the city is business friendly. Assign a staff member to build relationships with local and regional real estate brokers and developers interested in investing in infill locations. The staff person could provide personalized, one-on-one assistance to brokers seeking to locate new tenants or developers considering a new project. The city could also host monthly or quarterly breakfast meetings or other events for the real estate community to alert them to opportunities for new activity in the city and to encourage investment in downtown and other infill locations.</p>	<p>Economic development department; could also include participation by city manager, mayor's office, or other departments</p>	<p>G2, G4</p>	
<p><b>23. Site-selection assistance:</b> Providing site-selection assistance to new or relocating businesses could encourage businesses to locate in infill locations and established centers. This could include maintaining a regularly updated inventory of available commercial spaces as part of the city's economic development website, as well as suggesting locations and giving site tours to new businesses looking to locate in the city and existing businesses seeking to expand.</p>	<p>Economic development department</p>	<p>G1, G2, G4</p>	<p>See an example of a database of available properties, as well as additional site selection services, from Newport News, Virginia.<sup>30</sup></p>

<sup>30</sup> City of Newport News. " Site Selection Assistance." <http://www.nngov.com/668/Site-Selection-Assistance>. Accessed Jun. 27, 2014.

Policy Tools and Actions	Administrator	Goals	More Information
<p><b>24. Business improvement district:</b> A business improvement district can empower local property owners and businesses to improve the sense of place in their district, which could give them a competitive advantage. Guide local property owners and commercial tenants through forming a special business district (such as a business improvement district), in which businesses in a downtown or other defined district pay a tax, fee, or levy to contribute to maintaining, developing, or marketing their district.</p>	Economic development department	G1, G2, G4, G8	See a sample guide to starting a business improvement district from New York City. <sup>31</sup>
<p><b>25. Social media assistance:</b> Help local businesses expand their customer base by setting up a website or using social media platforms. Bring in a consultant to offer step-by-step training.</p>	Economic development department	G1, G2, G4	
<p><b>26. Coordinated business hours:</b> Encourage businesses in the downtown or commercial corridor to maintain common operating hours. Not having common hours can deter potential customers from shopping in the area since it causes confusion and frustration not knowing what will be open.</p>	Economic development department	G8	
<p><b>27. Business licenses for residential landlords:</b> Ensuring safe, high-quality homes is important for giving residents a high quality of life and attracting workers for local employers. Requiring licenses to become a landlord in the city gives the city contact information for absentee property owners so it can communicate with them about property owner responsibilities. Revenues from license fees could be used to help fund code enforcement or small improvements in the neighborhood or to help offset costs for maintaining certain infrastructure, like parks, community gardens, or street trees.</p>	Planning department	G10, G14	See an example of how business licenses for rental properties have been implemented from Tacoma, Washington. <sup>32</sup>

<sup>31</sup> New York City Department of Small Business Services. *Starting a Business Improvement District: A Step-by-Step Guide*. 2012. [http://www.nyc.gov/html/sbs/downloads/pdf/bid\\_guide\\_complete.pdf](http://www.nyc.gov/html/sbs/downloads/pdf/bid_guide_complete.pdf).

<sup>32</sup> City of Tacoma. "Rental Business License." [http://www.cityoftacoma.org/government/city\\_departments/finance/tax\\_and\\_license/rental\\_business\\_license](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/government/city_departments/finance/tax_and_license/rental_business_license). Accessed Sep. 22, 2014.

Policy Tools and Actions	Administrator	Goals	More Information
<p><b>Workforce and Employment.</b> Workforce development and employment tools can help give all residents the opportunity to benefit from economic development. These policy tools and actions can improve job training and employment opportunities for local residents. These types of strategies are most appropriate in places where lack of education and job training are barriers to economic development and are particularly important for transitioning economies in which the education and skills needed to obtain local jobs are changing rapidly.<sup>33</sup></p>			
<p><b>28. Community Revitalization Strategy Area:</b> Working with the state to designate an area as a Community Revitalization Strategy Area would bring many benefits, including the ability to use Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) money more flexibly for housing and economic development. The program can help transform a specific area by coordinating resources for comprehensive community revitalization.</p>	<p>Economic development department</p>	<p>G10</p>	<p>For more information about Community Revitalization Strategy Areas, including specific regulatory flexibility the program allows, see information from U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).<sup>34</sup></p>
<p><b>29. Homebuyer education and down payment assistance:</b> To help residents find homes they can afford and opportunities to invest in the community, create a program to educate residents about homeownership and down payment assistance opportunities. A mortgage payment can sometimes be less expensive than monthly rent, but many people are unable to meet down payment requirements. This program would educate would-be homebuyers about real estate financing and offer grants for the down payment. Financial resources for this program could come from a federal agency such as HUD.</p>	<p>Economic development department</p>	<p>G10</p>	<p>See a sample homeownership assistance program from Fort Worth, Texas that is funded by HUD.<sup>35</sup></p>

<sup>33</sup> For more ideas beyond those included here on how local governments could support workforce development, see National League of Cities. *Municipal Action Guide: Workforce Development for Economic Competitiveness*. 2010. <http://www.nlc.org/documents/Find%20City%20Solutions/Research%20Innovation/Economic%20Development/workforce-development-economic-competitiveness-gid-10.pdf>.

<sup>34</sup> HUD. *Revitalization Areas*. 2012. [http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=cdbg\\_bas\\_10.pdf](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=cdbg_bas_10.pdf).

<sup>35</sup> City of Fort Worth. "Homebuyer Assistance Program." <http://fortworthtexas.gov/neighborhoods/hap/>. Accessed Dec. 16, 2015.



Policy Tools and Actions	Administrator	Goals	More Information
<p><b>30. Tailored job-training programs:</b> Job-training programs that are tailored to the needs of local businesses are more likely to successfully prepare workers for local jobs. Partner with local businesses and community colleges or workforce training programs to create a tailored curriculum that prepares students for jobs in high-priority industries. Other potential partners could include local unions or trade organizations.</p>	<p>Economic development department</p>	<p>G3, G5, G6</p>	<p>For best practices and tools to promote partnerships among community colleges, the business community, and local and regional governments, see the compendium published by the American Association of Community Colleges and the National Center on Education and the Economy.<sup>36</sup></p>
<p><b>31. Career resource center:</b> Connecting local workers with nearby jobs would shorten commute times and improve quality of life for workers, as well as reduce pollution from driving. Partner with a local community college or job-training organization to create a career resource center to better connect residents seeking employment with local businesses. The center could maintain an up-to-date listing of available jobs and residents seeking employment; connect residents with appropriate education and training programs, including financial aid resources; host regular career fairs; connect residents and businesses with resources from regional or state economic development agencies, such as on-the-job training or workforce screening programs; and provide one-on-one career counseling on dedicated days each week or month.</p>	<p>Economic development department</p>	<p>G1, G2, G5, G6</p>	<p>See an example of a city-hosted career resource center from Santa Clarita, California.<sup>37</sup></p>

<sup>36</sup> American Association of Community Colleges and National Center on Education and the Economy. *Sustaining Partnerships for Regional Economic Growth: A Compendium of Promising Practices and Tools*. 2009. <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Resources/aaccprograms/cwed/Documents/sustainingpartnerships.pdf>.

<sup>37</sup> City of Santa Clarita. "Santa Clarita WorkSource Center." <http://econdeev.santa-clarita.com/santa-clarita-worksource-center>. Accessed Jul. 1, 2014.

Policy Tools and Actions	Administrator	Goals	More Information
<p><b>32. Local hiring:</b> Local-hiring policies typically require that certain government employees or some percentage of workers on city-funded projects live in the jurisdiction. These policies increase employment opportunities for the local workforce, ensure that government spending is invested back into the community, and reduce commute times for government workers.</p>	City manager	G5	For more information on local hire programs, see the Partnership for Working Families' <i>Making Development Work for Local Residents</i> . <sup>38</sup>
<p><b>33. Housing market study:</b> To ensure that the workers of local employers have the opportunity to live in the community, conduct a housing market study to identify what housing types are available and how the city could meet existing and future housing needs, particularly in central locations near employers.</p>	Planning department	G10	See a sample housing market study from Moore, Oklahoma. <sup>39</sup>
<p><b>34. Local business purchasing:</b> Purchasing goods and services locally supports local businesses and workers. Help nearby institutions that have a vested interest in community development, such as educational and medical institutions, to acquire goods and services locally, such as food or laundry and janitorial services.</p>	Community or economic development departments	G1	For more information on working with institutions to promote local business purchasing and economic development, see <i>Building Healthier Communities: Embracing the Anchor Mission</i> published by the Democracy Collaborative at the University of Maryland. <sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Partnership for Working Families. *Making Development Work for Local Residents: Local Hire Programs and Implementation Strategies that Serve Low-Income Communities*. 2008. <http://www.forworkingfamilies.org/resources/publications/making-development-work-local-residents-local-hire-programs-and>.

<sup>39</sup> RKG Associates, Inc. *Comprehensive Housing Market Analysis: City of Moore, Oklahoma*. 2014. <http://www.cityofmoore.com/sites/default/files/main-site/Moore%20Housing%20Final%20Report.pdf>.

<sup>40</sup> Zuckermann, David. *Hospitals Building Healthier Communities: Embracing the Anchor Mission*. The Democracy Collaborative at the University of Maryland. 2013. <http://community-wealth.org/sites/clone.community-wealth.org/files/downloads/Zuckerman-HBHC-2013.pdf>.

Policy Tools and Actions	Administrator	Goals	More Information
<p><b>Health and Environment.</b> Smart growth economic development strategies recognize the value of a good quality of life and a strong sense of place. Some are aimed at enhancing quality of life by increasing access to open space or improving street design to encourage walking, biking, and outdoor recreation. Others help communities ensure that they have high-quality homes affordable to a range of income levels. For example, a green building program can encourage healthier and more resource-efficient models of construction, renovation, operation, maintenance, and demolition to achieve multiple environmental, economic, and social benefits. By improving quality of life, these actions create places that help residents and businesses stay physically and economically healthy and provide a competitive advantage in attracting new residents and businesses.</p>			
<p><b>35. Shared-use playgrounds:</b> Playgrounds and parks are essential to healthy communities, but cities often have trouble maintaining sufficient park space. Partner with the local school district to promote physical activity and community health by creating shared-use facilities that are both school playgrounds and community parks.</p>	<p>Community development or health services department</p>	<p>G11</p>	<p>For more information on shared-use playgrounds, see the Safe Routes to School National Partnership's Shared Use of School and Community Facilities Web page.<sup>41</sup></p>
<p><b>36. School-based health clinic:</b> Access to community health services is critical to maintaining public health, particularly in areas with limited public transportation or existing health care facilities. Partner with the school district and a local community health organization to open a community health clinic in the school to promote health and wellness for students and their families.</p>	<p>Community development or health services department</p>	<p>G9</p>	<p>For more information about school-based health centers, see the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Health Resources and Services Administrations' Web page on School-Based Health Centers.<sup>42</sup></p>

<sup>41</sup> Safe Routes to School National Partnership. "Shared Use of School and Community Facilities." <http://saferoutespartnership.org/state/bestpractices/shareduse>. Accessed Jun. 27, 2014.

<sup>42</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. "School-Based Health Centers." <http://www.hrsa.gov/ourstories/schoolhealthcenters>. Accessed Jun. 27, 2014.

Policy Tools and Actions	Administrator	Goals	More Information
<p><b>37. Green building incentive program:</b> A green building incentive program for downtowns and other infill locations could reduce pollution, water use, and energy use, while making workers safer, healthier, more comfortable, and more productive. Green buildings can also reduce ongoing maintenance and operation costs, which appeals to investors and tenants. This program could include an expedited permitting process, reduced building and permit fees, and/or tax credits for developers of green buildings in key locations.</p>	<p>Building and safety department</p>	<p>G10</p>	<p>See an example green building incentive program from Arlington County, Virginia.<sup>43</sup></p>
<p><b>38. Green infrastructure:</b> Green infrastructure can improve water quality and supply, reduce flooding risk, save public and private funds, and protect public health through improved air quality and green spaces, among other benefits. Develop a plan to incorporate green infrastructure into the community to achieve multiple environmental, public health, social, and economic goals.</p>	<p>Planning department</p>	<p>G11, G12, G14, G17</p>	<p>For more information on how to develop a green infrastructure plan to manage stormwater while achieving other environmental, public health, social, and economic benefits, see EPA's <i>Enhancing Sustainable Communities with Green Infrastructure</i>.<sup>44</sup></p>
<p><b>39. Climate change resilience plan:</b> Climate change is creating challenges for cities, including greater extremes in temperature and rainfall, sea level rise, and more frequent natural hazards such as floods and storms. Identify the projected local impacts of climate change, and create a long-term plan to prepare for those impacts. The plan can be the basis for incorporating climate considerations into all community plans and policies.</p>	<p>Planning department</p>	<p>G17</p>	<p>For more information and tools to develop a climate resilience plan, see the U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit.<sup>45</sup></p>

<sup>43</sup> Arlington Initiative to Rethink Energy. "Green Building." <http://environment.arlingtonva.us/energy/green-building/>. Accessed Dec. 16, 2015.

<sup>44</sup> EPA. *Enhancing Sustainable Communities with Green Infrastructure*. 2014. <http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/enhancing-sustainable-communities-green-infrastructure>.

<sup>45</sup> Partnership of federal agencies and organizations led by the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). "U.S. Climate Resilience Toolkit." <http://toolkit.climate.gov>. Accessed Feb. 3, 2015.

Policy Tools and Actions	Administrator	Goals	More Information
<p><b>Brownfield and Infill Redevelopment.</b> Infill development, especially when it involves the assessment and cleanup of any environmental contamination, also can encourage reinvestment in nearby properties. However, infill development can be challenging for many reasons, including small parcel sizes and possible environmental contamination. Even the perception or possibility of contamination can discourage redevelopment because of unknown costs and additional time that could be required for cleanup.<sup>46</sup> Some of these policy tools and actions can help with the assessment, remediation, and redevelopment of brownfield sites. Others can provide incentives for redevelopment on other types of infill sites.<sup>47</sup></p>			
<p><b>40. Establish community goals for brownfields:</b> Community participation is essential to building broad support for brownfields remediation and ensuring that future development helps achieve community goals. Engage the community through advisory committees, public meetings, design workshops, focus groups, and other methods to learn community priorities for reusing brownfield sites.</p>	<p>Planning or economic development department</p>	<p>G16</p>	<p>For more information on how to engage the community and create an area-wide brownfields program, see EPA's <i>Brownfields Area-Wide Planning Program Fact Sheet</i>.<sup>48</sup></p>
<p><b>41. Citywide brownfields remediation program:</b> A coordinated, strategic approach to brownfields remediation would use funds more efficiently and encourage redevelopment of contaminated land. First, inventory local brownfield sites, then identify high-priority sites for cleanup based on local goals, including goals in the smart growth economic development strategy. Designate these sites as eligible for tools that have a targeted focus area and prioritize them for local, state, and federal funding assistance.</p>	<p>Planning or economic development department</p>	<p>G4</p>	
<p><b>42. Outreach to owners of vacant or underused properties in central locations:</b> Assign a staff member to contact owners of infill development sites to determine why new or redevelopment is not occurring and how the city could encourage it. The staff person could connect the property owner with real estate brokers and developers, work with property owners to change permitted uses, or conduct a market study to help owners understand potential uses.</p>	<p>Economic development department</p>	<p>G8</p>	

<sup>46</sup> EPA. *Smart Growth and Economic Success: Investing in Infill Development*. 2014. <http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/smart-growth-and-economic-success-investing-infill-development>.

<sup>47</sup> For information on developing an area-wide plan and implementation strategy for brownfield sites, which will help inform the assessment, cleanup, and reuse of brownfields properties and promote area-wide revitalization, see EPA. "Brownfields Area-Wide Planning Program." <http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/types-brownfields-grant-funding#tab-5>.

<sup>48</sup> EPA. *Brownfields Area-Wide Planning Program Fact Sheet*. 2012. <http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/brownfields-area-wide-planning-program-factsheet>.



Policy Tools and Actions	Administrator	Goals	More Information
<p><b>Transportation.</b> A well-connected, safe, and reliable transportation network that integrates driving, walking, biking, and public transit has many economic development benefits. It connects workers to jobs; lets people who cannot or choose not to drive get to stores, services, and amenities; and disperses users across several modes and routes, which can reduce traffic congestion. These policies can give people more options for getting around a neighborhood and the larger region. Infrastructure improvements could make walking and biking safer and more appealing, which could reduce people’s transportation costs and leave them more money to spend in the community.</p>			
<p><b>43. Wayfinding signage:</b> Wayfinding signage helps visitors locate landmarks and businesses in the downtown. An attractive and distinctive system can improve the appearance and bring visitors to the area, potentially increasing the number of customers for local businesses.</p>	<p>Planning department</p>	<p>G8, G9</p>	
<p><b>44. Two-way streets:</b> Where possible, allow traffic to flow in both directions. One-way streets can encourage drivers to drive faster, which puts pedestrians at risk. If a goal is to develop a walkable downtown, converting one-way streets into two-way streets can help make the area safer for pedestrians.</p>	<p>Transportation department</p>	<p>G5, G8, G9, G11, G13</p>	<p>For information on the advantages of two-way traffic, see an article in <i>Access Magazine</i> published by the University of California.<sup>49</sup></p>
<p><b>45. Coordinated public transportation:</b> Analyze public transportation service to determine if it is meeting the community’s needs. Work with major employers to see if service aligns with worker schedules. Making public transportation more convenient could increase ridership.</p>	<p>Transportation department</p>	<p>G5</p>	
<p><b>46. Multimodal transportation plan:</b> Safe walking, biking, and public transportation routes protect public health by encouraging physical activity and reducing pollution from vehicles. Develop a transportation plan that makes walking, biking, and public transportation safe, reliable options in addition to driving. The plan would identify assets, challenges, and opportunities for improving transit, biking, and pedestrian facilities, particularly in downtowns and other locations identified for infill development.</p>	<p>Transportation department</p>	<p>G5, G9, G11, G13</p>	<p>See examples of bicycle and pedestrian plans from Bellevue, Washington,<sup>50</sup> and Eugene, Oregon.<sup>51</sup></p>

<sup>49</sup> Gayah, Vikash V. “Two-Way Street Networks: More Efficient than Previously Thought?” *Access Magazine*. 2012. <http://www.uctc.net/access/41/access41-2way.pdf>.

<sup>50</sup> City of Bellevue. *City of Bellevue Pedestrian & Bicycle Transportation Plan Report*. 2009. [http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/pdf/PlanDesign\\_SamplePlans\\_Local\\_Bellevue2009.pdf](http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/pdf/PlanDesign_SamplePlans_Local_Bellevue2009.pdf).

<sup>51</sup> City of Eugene. *Eugene Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan*. 2012. [http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/pdf/PlanDesign\\_SamplePlans\\_Local\\_Eugene2012.pdf](http://www.pedbikeinfo.org/pdf/PlanDesign_SamplePlans_Local_Eugene2012.pdf).

Policy Tools and Actions	Administrator	Goals	More Information
<p><b>Infrastructure Financing.</b> Infrastructure improvement and maintenance are important for attracting private investment in redevelopment, but paying for infrastructure can be challenging for cities as resources for infrastructure financing dwindle. These tools are most applicable in communities where infrastructure problems are a major barrier to economic development, but local funding for capital improvements is scarce. For example, some historic downtowns have outdated utilities, crumbling sidewalks, and streets filled with potholes. To bring businesses and residents back downtown, investments are needed to update utilities and repair streets and sidewalks.<sup>52</sup></p>			
<p><b>47. Coordinated infrastructure investments:</b> Encourage coordinated infrastructure investment across city departments and with outside jurisdictions to reduce redundant tasks and save money. Wherever possible, improvements to walking and biking facilities should be made at the same time as larger infrastructure investments. This process could include establishing an interdepartmental or multijurisdictional working group, inventorying planned infrastructure improvements and identifying areas of overlap, and prioritizing projects and funding sources based on shared infrastructure requirements.</p>	<p>Planning department; could also include transportation department and other city agencies</p>	<p>G9, G13</p>	<p>See an example of a multijurisdictional infrastructure investment framework from the Central Corridor Funders Collaborative in Minneapolis/St. Paul.<sup>53</sup></p>
<p><b>48. Developer impact fees:</b> To pay for infrastructure improvements, such as green infrastructure, streetscape improvements, and bike lanes, charge new development projects one-time fees to defray the costs of expanding public services. These fees are typically collected on a pay-as-you-go basis and used to cover one-time capital investments rather than ongoing operations and maintenance.</p>	<p>Planning department</p>	<p>G9</p>	<p>For more information on these and other local infrastructure financing tools, see EPA's <i>Infrastructure Financing Options for Transit-Oriented Development</i>.<sup>54</sup></p>
<p><b>49. Special assessment districts:</b> Work with local property and business owners to build support for a special assessment district, where property and/or business owners pay a fee to fund specific improvements in the area. As allowable types of special assessment districts vary by state, the city would need to research the legal structure and steps to implementation.</p>	<p>Economic development department</p>	<p>G4, G8</p>	

<sup>52</sup> For a more comprehensive overview of infrastructure financing tools and mechanisms, see EPA. *Infrastructure Financing Options for Transit-Oriented Development*. 2013. <http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/infrastructure-financing-options-transit-oriented-development>.

<sup>53</sup> Central Corridor Funders Collaborative. "Investment Framework." <http://www.funderscollaborative.org/partners/investment-framework>. Accessed Jun. 27, 2014.

<sup>54</sup> EPA. *Infrastructure Financing Options for Transit-Oriented Development*. 2013. <http://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/infrastructure-financing-options-transit-oriented-development>.

Policy Tools and Actions	Administrator	Goals	More Information
<p><b>50. Tax increment financing (TIF):</b> TIF captures the increase in tax revenues associated with new investment in areas designated for redevelopment; those increases are then used to fund additional improvements. In states where TIF is available, use TIF to fund infrastructure improvements, affordable housing, and other catalytic development projects.</p>	<p>Redevelopment agency</p>	<p>G9</p>	

